AAHOA works to build partnerships

By J.K. Patel
Special to H&MM

The dictionary defines "partner" as someone who shares the same objectives, interests and concerns, and who is on the same team.

It's a definition that certainly applies appropriately and emphatically to the Asian American Hotel Owners Assn., which is working actively to build a winning team partnership between its members and our hospitality industry colleagues.

However, we believe actions speak louder than words. That's why in recent weeks we announced our donation of $150,000 to the American Hotel & Motel Assn.'s Hospitality 2000 campaign, which is designed to improve the future quality and competitiveness of the U.S. lodging industry.

We didn't make this as a contribution, rather as an investment in our collective future. Our business is changing so quickly that only a program like Hospitality 2000 will ensure the type of leadership we need for all of us to prosper into the next century.

We at AAHOA recognize that there are serious problems facing our industry—and we realize that serious solutions deserve serious funding. We also realize that as a significant presence in our industry, AAHOA must be prepared to carry its fair share of the burdens as well as the rewards.

Educational growth

Learning, growing, prospering . . . that's the focus of Hospitality 2000 and it's also the focus of AAHOA's Institute of Business Management, a continuing education program that was developed in conjunction with the Educational Institute of the AH&MA and was launched in 1995.

AAHOA currently offers two courses titled "Effectively Managing Hotel Operations." The basic version is designed for sole proprietors and is subtitled "An Operator's Guide to Profitability and Success." The advanced version is for owners of multiple properties and is subtitled "From Single to Multi-Unit Ownership."

These courses are offered in various cities throughout the year. We actively encourage AAHOA members to attend, but we also warmly invite our non-AAHOA colleagues to join us for these professionally informative and stimulating sessions.

AAHOA's commitment to professional education continues at our series of regional conferences. A typical session this year is drawing 200 to 350 attendees—and we again invite our non-member industry colleagues to drop in if you're in the area and if your schedule permits. We welcome the opportunity to have you experience the hospitality of AAHOA.

With the baseball season in full swing, it's appropriate to remember that we in the hospitality industry are much like the big league teams—those who end up on top in October will be those who master the basics and get their fair share of base hits, but who also occasionally swing for the fence and get a home run. We at AAHOA are keeping one eye on the basics and one eye on the fence—and we encourage you to do the same.

J.K. Patel is the 1996 chairman of AAHOA and the c.e.o. of North Point Hospitality Group, which operates properties in the Southeast.

on the AAHOA calendar

Operations Seminar

▲ July 13-14
Chatanooga, Tenn.

Annual Convention

▲ Dec. 10-13
Orlando

Casino city grows crazy with hotels

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now. Also, the largest hotel in Tunica, Sam's Town Casino and Hotel, with 500 guestrooms and 350 more under construction, is larger than any hotel in Memphis. The Peabody in Memphis has 100 fewer rooms.

And, because of Tunica's growth, The Peabody, along with other Memphis hotels, is suffering at the front desk, housekeeping staff, restaurants and other service jobs because the casinos, armed with more money and better benefits, has stripped Memphis of its finest hotel workers.

In the last four years, Tunica has created 11,000 jobs from a population base of 8,500. Franklin said the summer will add another 5,000 jobs because of the increase in guestrooms.

"We will have 16,000 jobs in hotels and casino hotels here," he said. "We will get them from Memphis. So far, we have exhausted the Memphis service pool, at least the cream of it. We have greatly impacted Memphis."

According to figures from the CVB, the hotel's numbers are holding up so far.

"The casino hotels and chains are staying at 90 percent occupancy consistently and the casino hotels alone are at 100 percent," Franklin said. He added that the average daily rate for the chains is $53 and $45 for casinos.

Market demand

Also, the market demand has increased over last year, according to Franklin.

"That's why casinos are expanding their number of guestrooms," he said. "The average stay is no longer just a day trip down here because we are two separate markets."

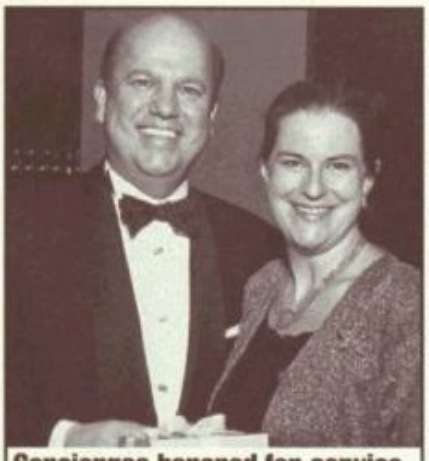
Tunica attracts from not only the local four- to six-hour driving area around Memphis and surrounding Arkansas and Mississippi, but also from Missouri and Alabama.

"And when you get people from Oklahoma City and other Midwest states, it is no longer a day trip," Franklin said.

Major chains in Tunica include Holiday Inn Worldwide, Promus Hotels, Key West Hotels and Sheraton.

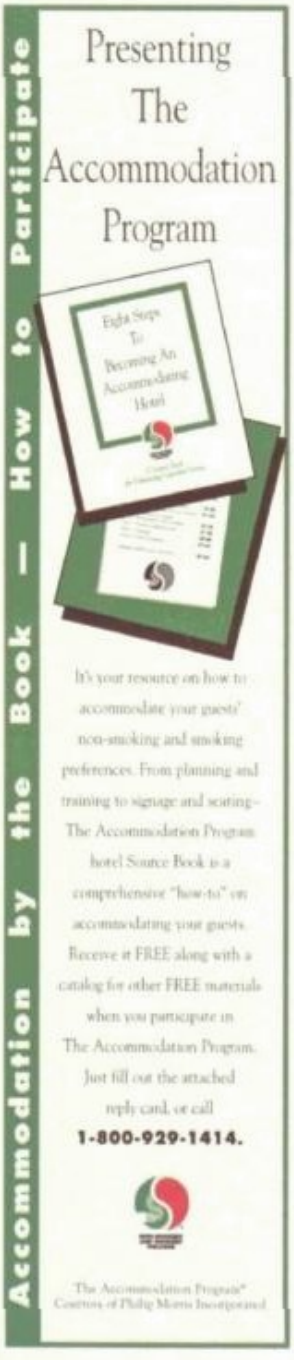
"Most of the hotel growth is through the casinos," Franklin said. "But we have heard from other chains."

Fitzgerald's Casino is building a 504-room hotel, for example, and both Hollywood Casino and Horseshoe Casino are expanding to 500 rooms. H&MM



Concierges honored for service

CHICAGO—The Concierge Network of Chicago's Polly Pancoe, seen here with the awards presenter, and Kyle Caskey were recently honored at the Fifth Annual Silver Plume Gala for their commitment to the hospitality industry.



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